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ABSTRACT

Inservice education is primarily planned and justified on the basis of its contribution to and impact upon the classroom. Although the student must remain central, staff development programs can and must concurrently address and relate to other institutional and/or organizational goals and objectives. Inservice or staff development should not be viewed as a perfunctory activity but as an integral component of a higher, more complex system, and should be viewed as a facilitator of change toward achieving program and organizational development goals as well as impacting on student behavior and enhancing professional growth. Five factors influence successful development of programs: cooperative inservice education planning, relationship to the school program, resources, commitment to professional development, and rewards. The establishment of priorities for local inservice staff development could be based upon a composite of five different variables. These include institutional goals, anticipated program development and/or redirection, staff performance appraisals, an assessment of student development, and perceived teacher needs. (JH)

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ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES FOR LOCAL INSERVICE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES FOR LOCAL INSERVICE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

It is becoming increasingly clear that the quality of education does not depend primarily on numbers of students, or on diversity of the programs, or on expanded facilities, or on new structures for decision-making, although these factors certainly contribute. The quality of education depends primarily on the quality of staff.[1]

Such an observation can be attributed, in part, to the recognition that:

> Learning to teach and maintaining competence to teach is a continuous process. . . . professional growth is a continuous process, not only in the mind of the individual professional, but also in the formal provisions made for professional growth. Preservice preparation provides a substantial beginning toward a holistic concept of a professional teacher, and inservice education continues development within the framework of that concept. Teaching competence, then, is developed and honed in a constant and conscious effort to make professional improvement a career-long process. (Underlines added.)[2]

The title of this presentation is "Establishing Priorities for Local Inservice Staff Development." In addressing the assigned topic, however, it seems imperative to conceptualize staff development in terms of its relationships and influences upon other operational components of the school system. Thus, within the context of this paper an attempt will be made to:

1. Set forth the purpose of inservice education;
2. Propose a conceptualization of inservice education regarding its relationship to other aspects of the education system;
3. Identify some factors that influence the effectiveness of a staff development program; and
4. Suggest some ways and means for determining inservice education needs.

For discussion purposes, the terms inservice education and staff development as reflected in this paper are used interchangeably.

The Purpose of Inservice Education

A comprehensive review of the literature reveals differing viewpoints and/or purposes of inservice education. However, for the sake of this discussion, the purpose of inservice education is " . . . the improvement of educational programs for students. Inservice programs for the professional development of educational personnel should therefore be designed, in the final analysis, to have an impact on the quality of school programs for students."[3]

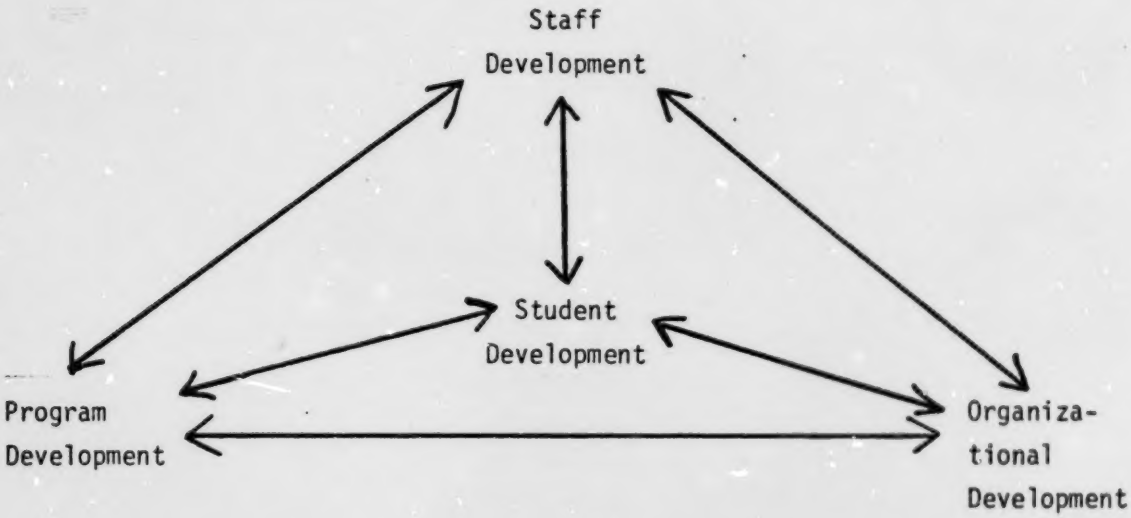
In other words, inservice education is planned and justified on the basis of its contribution to and impact upon the classroom. "If the inservice programs are doing their job, the teachers should be acquiring new and additional skills. They should display the skills in the classrooms. These changes in a teacher's behavior should lead to changes in pupil behavior and perhaps in pupil performance."[4]

It is important that the school administrator fully comprehends why inservice education exists and the ultimate role it is to play. Such an understanding affects the way the administrator plans and administers this phase of the educational process.

Inservice Education's Place in the Institutional Structure

Although the preceding section stated that the ultimate purpose of inservice education is to impact upon pupil behavior, it is essential that such a purpose is not perceived too narrowly. Granted that although the student must remain central to any inservice education activity, staff development programs can and must concurrently address and relate to other institutional and/or

organizational goals and objectives. Pictorally, staff development in this context can be illustrated thusly:



Such an illustration maintains the centrality of student development while at the same time tying staff development and inservice education into program development and organizational development.

Program development includes curricular and instructionally allied activities while organizational development relates to decision making processes and staff relationships regarding programs and activities that will ultimately affect students.

Such a staff development construct is dynamic in design. To illustrate such dynamics, an organizational development goal to integrate all classes throughout the system will necessitate considerable staff development if the system has been relatively segregated. Likewise, a decision to move to a more individualized guided learning experience approach to teaching carries

numerous implications regarding the effects that such a decision may have upon staff development and organizational development.

The intent of this discussion regarding inservice education in the institutional structure is to emphasize that inservice education or staff development should not be viewed as a perfunctory activity in the institutional setting. The intent is to suggest that staff development is more than "released time" or "Tuesdays for thinking"; it is an integral component of a higher, more complex system, and should be viewed as a facilitator of change toward achieving program and organizational development goals as well as impacting on student behavior and enhancing professional growth.

Factors Influencing Staff Development Programs

Successful inservice education programs for staff don't just happen! As is true with most other programmatic efforts, key factors weigh heavily upon whether a staff development program is really on target. For discussion purposes, five such factors have been identified and will be discussed briefly in the following paragraphs.

Cooperative Inservice Education Planning - The decision-making process of what, when, where, and how inservice education and staff development activities are to be offered is critical in determining their ultimate success. Teacher involvement in the selection of goals and related activities are more beneficial to participants compared to those programs where goals and activities are preplanned. To assure teacher involvement, the practice of utilizing the services of an inservice educational program development committee which includes teacher representation is becoming more prevalent.

Relationship to the School Program - Inservice education should reflect an aura of relevancy and timeliness in relation to concurrent activities and

thrusts across the educational institutional. This is to say, inservice education cannot and should not be expected to stand alone, but must be tied to specific and immediate student, program, or organizational development goals and objectives.

Resources -Inservice education is critical to the promotion and maintenance of a viable educational institution. An endeavor of such importance requires and deserves an adequate share of essential resources. Such resources include time, materials, funds, and staff required to achieve the desired outcomes. Historically, administrators have all too often viewed inservice education as of secondary importance that could be accommodated if extra funds were available. Administrators must view staff development as a priority activity, and plan and budget accordingly. To do less is to admit that such an activity is not held in very high regard.

Commitment to Professional Development - As mentioned in the preceding section, a commitment of resources is indicative of an educational leader and/or institution's commitment to inservice education. However, just the commitment of resources is not enough. The administrator must assume a leadership role in the staff development process. He/she must be a person of influence as well as a person of action. As Wilfred A. Peterson wrote in The Art of Living, "he carries a banner, not a whip".

The basis for such a manifestation of leadership on the part of the administration rests on the premise that commitment and enthusiasm are precedent setting and will go a long way in gaining the entire staff's sincere commitment to continuous professional development.

Rewards - "Whether extrinsic or intrinsic, rewards to all who participate in inservice education should be clear and precise."[5] Ordinarily the primary awards have been economic or additional credentials. Such awards are

essential and should be retained, however alternative reward incentives should also be utilized such as approbation and recognition, additional freedoms, new privileges, higher status, greater prestige, and even more responsibility.

Some rewards are earned and cannot be bestowed. Pride and increased self esteem are illustrative of such rewards, but they play a key role in the promotion and maintenance of a viable inservice program.

Regardless of the nature of the reward system, its importance cannot be ignored or minimized in a viable staff development program.

Determining Local Inservice Staff Development Priorities

Finally, this paper is getting around to addressing the assigned topic. However, the writer did not feel comfortable in addressing the topic without some preliminary discussion regarding factors that play directly and/or indirectly on needs assessment.

It would appear that the establishment of priorities for local inservice staff development could be based upon a composite of five different variables. These variables include the institutional goals, anticipated program development and/or redirection, staff performance appraisals, an assessment of student development, and perceived teacher needs.

Institutional goals and objectives - Because of the relationship between organizational development and staff development, it is imperative that there be a clear, public statement of institutional goals. Once such goals are articulated, implications for staff development will become apparent. Depending upon the institutional timeline for realizing such stated goals and objectives, inservice staff development priorities can be determined accordingly.

Program development and/or redirection - Few additions and/or changes in school based programs can come about without some need for inservice staff

development. Hence, if such additions or modifications in programming are imminent, priority inservice staff development implications are obvious.

Staff performance appraisals - The theory underlying staff appraisal has long been espoused to be that of instructional improvement. Neither opportunity nor time permits a thorough examination as to the extent to which that theory is actually practiced, but regardless, it is still a sound theory. Periodic analysis of staff performance appraisal reports may reveal some insightful and substantive information concerning the establishment of priority inservice staff development needs.

Assessment of student development - We are currently experiencing a point in history when the public's hue and cry is for greater accountability from the standpoint of the schools. Demands for a "back to the basics" movement have echoed across the country which has prompted something over thirty-two states to either enact or give serious consideration to passing minimum competency testing legislation.

The purpose of this section is not to debate the pros and cons of testing. However, it is to suggest that most schools do subscribe to some kind of a standardized testing program, and an analysis of such test results may reveal some clues as to where students are performing at sub-standard levels. Such clues may reflect a need for inservice staff development, either to raise consciousness levels that the sub-standard performance areas must receive additional emphasis, or to facilitate staff in becoming increasingly competent in teaching of the essential skills and understandings related to the sub-standard performance areas. In any case, an assessment of student performance can provide pertinent information and data that could suggest inservice staff development priorities.

Perceived teacher needs - Although this particular factor has been left

until last as a consideration in determining inservice staff development needs, it is not the intent to detract from its importance. Perceived or felt teacher needs are important and must be taken into account in arriving at inservice staff development priorities. However, for too many years this technique has been the main, if not the sole determinant, in arriving at such priorities.

Suffice it to suggest that the exclusion of an assessment of perceived teacher needs in establishing inservice staff development priorities would be wrong. On the contrary however, using it as the sole determinant would be less than wise.

Once all sources of information and data have been taken into account that carry inservice staff development implications, the inservice educational program development committee is in a position to design an inservice staff development program.

Summary

This paper has attempted to address, to some extent: a proposed purpose of inservice education, a conceptualization of inservice education in the institutional system, some factors that influence the effectiveness of staff development programs, and some ways to prioritize local inservice needs.

So what?

The extent to which any of this paper's content is useful in an applied nature can be determined by two criteria.

> The first is whether or not the new procedure or curricula are adopted. Does the teacher use the new curriculum material? Does the teacher use the new skills in the classroom?
>
> The second criterion is whether or not the change, either in the teaching style or performance of the teachers, or in the curricula produces a measurable effect or pupil learning.[6]

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